

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AID-05 IGA-01 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15

RSC-01 L-02 H-01 CIAE-00 INR-05 NSAE-00 DODE-00

TRSE-00 OMB-01 EB-07 SR-02 ORM-01 IO-10 /072 W

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P R 300514Z NOV 74

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1654

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

CINCPAC POLAD

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 VIENTIANE 8759

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EAID, SREF, MARR, MASS, LA, CB

SUBJECT: TALK WITH PRIME MINISTER

BEGIN SUMMARY. I VISITED PRIME MINISTER SOUVANNA PHOUMA IN LUANG PRABANG NOVEMBER 29. HE APPEARED STRONGER AND MORE VIGOROUS THAN AT OUR LAST MEETING BUT HE IS NOW VERY MUCH THE OLD GENTLEMAN POTTERING AROUND AT HOME AND FOLLOWING ONLY REMOTELY THE AFFAIRS OF THE KINGDOM. ALTHOUGH HE GAVE ME HIS USUAL BLAST ON THE MYOPIC POLICIES OF PRESIDENT THIEU, HE STATED CATEGORICALLY THAT HE WOULD NOT RECOGNIZE THE PRG UNTIL IT HAD A CAPITAL AND THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOVERNMENT. END SUMMARY.

1. GRUNK. AFTER TELLING SOUVANNA OF THE FORTHCOMING CHIEFS OF MISSION MEETING, I COMMENTED THAT THE UN VOTE HAD BEEN A NEAR THING BUT THAT WE WERE PLEASED AT THE WAY IT HAD WORKED OUT. SOUVANNA REPLIED THAT THE PROBLEM LAY WITH THE ARABS AND AFRICANS WHO DID NOT UNDERSTAND THE KHMER PROBLEM. HE ARTFULLY AVOIDED DISCUSSING THE LAO POSITION BY NOTING THAT AMBASSADOR KHAMPAN PANYA HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED TO PARTICIPATE IN

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THE DEBATE. (ONE MIGHT WELL HAVE THOUGHT THAT LAOS

HAD PLAYED A CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE.) SOUVANNA SAID THAT NEGOTIATIONS SHOULD NOW BE POSSIBLE. ONE SHOULD PAY NO ATTENTION TO SIHANOUK AND TRY TO WORK SOMETHING OUT WITH KHIEU SAMPHAN. I SAID WE HOPED TALKS SHOULD START BUT THE BALL WAS IN THE COMMUNIST COURT.

2. PRG. I TOLD SOUVANNA THAT THERE WAS A GOOD DEAL OF CONJECTURE TAKING PLACE IN VIENTIANE WITH REGARD TO WHAT APPEARED TO BE A PROLONGED MEETING OF THE PATHET LAO CENTRAL COMMITTEE. THE FACT THAT PHOUMI HAD BEEN UNABLE TO ABSENT HIMSELF IN ORDER TO MEET DEPUTY FONMIN FIRYUBIN SEEMED TO INDICATE THAT THE MATTERS BEING DEALT WITH WERE OF CONSIDERABLE SIGNIFICANCE. I SAID THAT I HOPED THAT WITH THE RETURN OF PHOUMI AND PRINCE SOUPHANOUVONG THE PRIME MINISTER WOULD NOT BE PLACED UNDER TREMENDOUS PRESSURE TO RECOGNIZE THE PRG. SOUVANNA BRIDLED AT THIS AND SAID THAT PRESSURE OF THIS KIND WOULD BE UNAVAILING. PRESIDENT THIEU WAS, OF COURSE, NOT APPLYING THE PARIS ACCORDS AND HAD MADE NO EFFORT WHATSOEVER TO INCLUDE THE THIRD FORCE IN HIS GOVERNMENT. UNTIL HE MODERATED HIS POSITION THERE COULD BE NO HOPE FOR PEACE IN VIETNAM. I REPLIED THAT ALTHOUGH I REALIZED THAT SOUVANNA FOUND THIEU'S PERFORMANCE DISAPPOINTING, I VERY MUCH HOPED THAT THIS DISENCHANTMENT WOULD NOT LEAD HIM TOWARD RECOGNITION OF THE PRG. SOUVANNA THEN STATED CATEGORICALLY THAT HE HAD NO INTENTION OF RECOGNIZING THE PRG AND WOULD NOT DO SO UNTIL IT HAD A CAPITAL AND THE OTHER APPURTENANCES OF A GOVERNMENT. I SAID THAT I KNEW WASHINGTON WOULD BE PLEASED TO KNOW THAT THE PRIME MINISTER HAD NOT CHANGED HIS VIEWS IN THIS REGARD.

3. AID. TURNING TO THE SUBJECT OF AMERICAN AID, I NOTED THAT THE SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE HAD VOTED OUT A BILL WITH A LIMIT OF \$70 MILLION IN AID TO LAOS. SOUVANNA SAID THAT HE HAD SEEN THIS IN THE PAPERS. I TOLD HIM THAT WE CONTINUED TO BELIEVE THAT ECONOMIC AID WOULD BE APPROXIMATELY AT THE LEVEL OF LAST YEAR BUT SOME CURTAILMENT, PERHAPS A CON-

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SIDERABLE CURTAILMENT, WOULD TAKE PLACE ON THE MILITARY SIDE. I SAID THAT THIS BROUGHT A SPECIAL URGENCY TO THE QUESTION OF REDUCING THE FAR FORCE LEVEL. ALTHOUGH AGREEMENT HAD BEEN REACHED A LONG TIME AGO ON FORCE REDUCTIONS, THE ARMY STAFF WAS DRAGGING ITS FEET AND NO REPEAT NO REAL REDUCTIONS WERE TAKING PLACE. I SAID THAT IN MY VIEW IT WAS IMPERATIVE THAT THE LONG DISCUSSED PHASED REDUCTION

BEGIN AT ONCE. THE PRIME MINISTER MADE NOTE OF MY COMMENT AND SAID HE WOULD TALK TO DEFMIN SISOUK AND GENERAL BOUNPONE.

4. ELECTRICITE DU LAOS. I TOLD THE PRIME MINISTER THAT ANOTHER BOTHERSOME PROBLEM WAS THE CONTINUING CONFUSION WHICH EXISTED IN VIENTIANE WITH REGARD TO THE ROLE OF KHAM SING, THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF ELECTRICITE DU LAOS. ALTHOUGH KHAM SING MIGHT WELL BE GUILTY OF VARIOUS MISDEMEANORS THIS HAD NOT YET BEEN ESTABLISHED AND THE PRESENT SHARING OF RESPONSIBILITIES BETWEEN KHAM SING AND PUBLIC WORKS MINISTER SING KAPO WAS CREATING CONFUSION AND CAUSING DELAYS WHICH MIGHT WELL IMPERIL NAM NGUM PHASE II. THE PRIME MINISTER SAID HE HAD INSTRUCTED SING KAPO TO DO WHATEVER KHAM SING SUGGESTED AND THAT HE THOUGHT THIS PROBLEM HAD BEEN SOLVED. HE TOOK NOTE OF IT AND SAID HE WOULD DISCUSS IT WITH PHOUMI.

5. REFUGEES. I TOLD THE PRIME MINISTER THAT IT WOULD BE INTERESTING TO SEE THE POSITION THE PATHET LAO WILL TAKE ON THE QUESTION OF REFUGEES RETURNING TO THE "LIBERATED ZONE" IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING. IN MY OPINION, THE PATHET LAO FACED THE DILEMMA OF WISHING REFUGEES TO RETURN, WHILE NOT YET BEING WILLING TO ALLOW FREEDOM OF COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO ZONES. I EMPHASIZED THAT INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS WISHING TO HELP

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 VIENTIANE 8759

THE REFUGEES WOULD OBVIOUSLY INSIST ON ACCESS TO RESETTLEMENT CENTERS. SOUVANNA SAID THAT ANOTHER PROBLEM WAS THE INABILITY OF THE PATHET LAO TO MAKE THE NECESSARY PREPARATIONS FOR THE REFUGEES. CLEARLY THEY WERE RELUCTANT TO ALLOW OUTSIDERS TO VISIT THEIR ZONE. HE AGREED THAT THIS WAS AN URGENT MATTER AND SAID HE WOULD DISCUSS IT WITH PRINCE SOUPHANOUVONG WHEN HE RETURNS NEXT WEEK.

6. CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING. RETURNING TO THE QUESTION OF THE ISSUES FACING THE PATHET LAO CENTRAL COMMITTEE, SOUVANNA THEORIZED THAT THERE WAS A SERIOUS CONFLICT BETWEEN THE MODERATES LIKE PHOUMI AND PRINCE SOUPHANOUVONG AND THE REAL REVOLUTIONARIES WHO STAYED IN SAM NEUA. I SUGGESTED THAT UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES IT MIGHT BE WISE FOR THE CABINET TO POSTPONE DISCUSSION OF ANY CONTENTIOUS ISSUES UNTIL AFTER THE RESULTS OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEETING HAD BEEN MADE KNOWN TO THE VIENTIANE SIDE. I SAID I HOPED THE SO-CALLED MODERATES WOULD NOT HAVE STIFFENED THEIR POSITION. SOUVANNA REPLIED THAT THIS WOULD BE NO PROBLEM AND THAT HE FORESAW NO DIFFICULTY IN MANAGING PHOUMI AND PRINCE SOUPHANOUVONG.

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7. NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THAT ONE QUESTION HE WISHED TO SEE RESOLVED WAS THAT OF THE DISSOLUTION OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY. THE CABINET HAD TAKEN A DECISION AND ALL THAT REMAINED WAS FOR THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS TO OBTAIN THE KING'S APPROVAL. THIS MATTER WOULD BE HANDLED NEXT WEEK WHEN THE CABINET WOULD COME TO MEET WITH HIM IN LUANG PRABANG. (COMMENT: ALTHOUGH SOUVANNA MADE LIGHT OF THIS ISSUE, IT IS ONE THAT IS VERY CLOSE TO THE HEARTS OF THE POLITICIANS ON THE VIENTIANE SIDE AND I WAS SURPRISED AT THE CONFIDENCE SOUVANNA DISPLAYED IN THE KING'S WILLINGNESS TO GO ALONG WITH THE PRESENT PROPOSAL.)

8. COMMENT. ALTHOUGH WE HAVE NO INFORMATION ON THE DELIBERATIONS OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE IT IS CERTAINLY POSSIBLE THAT THE PATHET LAO MINISTERS WILL RETURN FROM THE MEETING WITH NEW GUIDELINES. SOUVANNA'S TRADITIONAL OPTIMISM IS NOW COMBINED WITH

A REMOTENESS FROM DAY TO DAY PROBLEMS AND I BELIEVE
HE UNDERESTIMATES THE DIFFICULTIES HE MAY CONFRONT
WHEN THE ISSUES WHICH HAVE BEEN UNRESOLVED FOR SO
LONG ARE CONSIDERED IN COMING WEEKS.
WHITEHOUSE

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